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JEAN-BAPTISTE
GREUZE

Helen I. Doble
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Sept 1935

GEMS OF ART



Exhibited in the Salon, 1769

In the Wallace Collection

THE VOTIVE OFFERING TO CUPID

GREUZE

1725-1805

By

BEATRICE A. WALDRAM

1923

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JEAN-BAPTISTE GREUZE

Chapter I : Early Life

JEAN-BAPTISTE GREUZE, perhaps the most widely known of French eighteenth-century painters, came, like so many men of talent, of hard-working and unpretentious people; but he also belongs to that smaller number who are able to convert the humble surroundings and scenes of their childhood into a commercial and professional asset.

We know him now almost entirely as the painter of children and charming young girls, but his first triumphs were gained by his genre pictures of bourgeois and peasant life.

The following extract from the parish register of Tournus, near Macon, enables us to visualize his early surroundings, in which actual poverty apparently played no part :—

Jean, lawful son of Sieur Jean Louis Greuze, master tiler, living at the same Tournus, and of Claudine Roch, his wife, born the 21st August, 1725, was baptized the same day by me, curate as signed below; the godparents were Sieur Jean Bezaud, also master tiler, and Demoiselle Antoinette Auberut, wife of Hugues Brulé, baker in the said parish, all of whom have signed below, except the said godfather, who knows not how.

The boy's love of drawing manifested itself early, and his father, proud of his clever son, looked forward to making him an architect, a profession which, with the shrewd commercial instinct of his class, he foresaw would utilize his son's talent

and could be built up on the solid basis of his own business of master tiler and mason.

The younger Greuze was not of the same way of thinking; his interest in plans and elevations was small, and every moment that he could steal from his work was devoted to the copying of pictures. One can well believe that in so doing he received but scant encouragement from his practical father.

Such details as we have of the boyhood of Greuze are supplied by the pen of Madame de Valori, his godchild and pupil, to whom, when an old man, he had talked of his early life.

There is one incident which is often quoted as an example of the parental stupidity and opposition with which the young painter had to contend. Having prepared with great care a pen drawing from a copy of the head of St. James, and presented it to his father on his fête day, the perverse parent, who at first had mistaken the drawing for an engraving, refused to accept it.

The story is variously told, and sometimes the drawing, instead of providing an occasion for wrath, is made the means of the boy attaining his heart's desire and the cause of the father's consent to his son becoming a painter.

It is likely that in telling this story in after years the painter had overlooked its true significance, and that the father had seized this occasion to attempt to suppress that vanity and self-esteem which in the future were to cause his son so much heart-burning and make for him so many enemies.

That there was opposition one can accept as a fact, and possibly the elder Greuze took harsh methods to induce his son to give up what must have appeared to him a very foolish and unprofitable idea; but, seeing that the boy was in earnest—and

all his life Jean-Baptiste was always in deadly earnest—Greuze *père* took him to Lyons and there apprenticed him to a painter of the name of Grondon, or Gromdon. This man, to use his pupil's own phrase, kept a "picture factory"; and from this factory, with the aid of his assistants, he turned out an enormous number of "pictures" for sale.

This may well have been the elder Greuze's conception of a painter's life; and the future pictured for his son, that of a master painter—as he himself was a master tiler—rising in his profession and employing young men in his turn to manufacture wretched daubs to be scattered over the countryside.

The "picture factory," nevertheless, was for the young enthusiast a step upwards towards the end he had in view, and, making the best of his opportunities, diligently he applied himself to the work in hand. Quantity—not quality—being the demand, and setting himself to fulfil it, he was soon able to turn out a picture, sufficiently well executed to satisfy his master, in one day, and so have time left for his own studies.

It is a coincidence that Watteau, who was also the son of a master tiler, should have undergone a somewhat similar experience in Paris; but, unlike Watteau, Greuze was endowed with good health and a sound constitution, and thus was enabled to work untiringly.

Grondon was in the habit of touring round the neighbourhood, painting the portraits of the well-to-do tradesmen and their wives and daughters. If Greuze accompanied him on any of these journeys—and it is more than possible that he did—the experience supplied him with material to be stored up in his mind and used later for his pictures. The impressionable

lad, eager in his search for beauty, could find it in his own homely surroundings, and to these early impressions his heart and hand remained true throughout his whole life.

According to Madame de Valori, it was during his apprenticeship to Grondon, and in his own spare time, that the picture "A Father of a Family reading the Bible to his Children" was painted.

It is not easy to determine whether the choice of the subject of this picture was the result of an impression received in his own home or whether it was a scene he had witnessed on his tours with Grondon; but it was, so far as the young painter's future success was concerned, a happy, if at that time an unconscious choice. This picture, which afterwards did so much towards securing his recognition by the public, whilst being an ambitious composition, represents a homely and, at that time, quite unusual subject. The setting is a lofty room in a farmhouse or raftered cottage; the venerable father, horned spectacles in hand, is either explaining a passage that he has just read from the large Bible in front of him or looking to see the effect of the reading upon his audience, who, eight in number, are assembled round him. The figures are well placed, although, as in most of Greuze's later pictures, the composition is crowded. The members of the group round the table all express a right and proper attention; but a natural touch is given to the scene by the figure of the youngest child, who, too small to be impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, would entice the dog to play with him; in which innocent distraction he is being restrained by the grandmother, who, seated rather apart from the rest, has been listening, distaff in hand.

GIRL LEANING ON HER HAND

In the Wallace Collection





The work in the "factory" was probably not so harmful and soul-destroying as it seems. Gifted with less determination, the boy would have ultimately degenerated, as many another did, into a mere dauber. Greuze, who was made of sterner material, could profit by and rise above those very conditions that are the death-blow to a weaker talent; he himself attributed much of his facility in laying on colour and his powers of draughtsmanship to this early experience.

There is no reason to think that he was specially unhappy, unless we count as unhappiness that sighing over unconquered fields, which is the heritage of youth; a Benjamin's portion of this heritage falls naturally to those who would take art for their mistress.

From the first, youth and beauty in woman called forth his admiration; later they formed the subject matter for most of his pictures, labelled though they were with moral or instructive titles.

An early, if not his earliest, love experience came during the apprenticeship in Grondon's house, where the boy developed a sentimental, yet quite respectful, attachment to his master's pretty and still youthful wife. Of this passing passion no one would have heard but for an incident witnessed by Madame Grondon's daughter, who afterwards married Grétry, the composer, by whom it was chronicled. The young lady tells what she might well have kept to herself, how, entering the studio unexpectedly, she found Greuze on the floor apparently looking for something, and although he averred that such was his occupation, her keen eyes had detected that he was kissing one of her mother's shoes; a trivial story, only recalled to bear

witness to his romantic nature. But art was the business of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, and it was not long before he found the little world of Lyons too small for his ambitions. As soon as his apprenticeship was ended he set out for Paris.

Before following the movements of our artist further we shall do well to consider the conditions of society in Paris at that time.

Madame de Pompadour, then virtually sharing the throne of Louis XV, took the lead in a court satiated with frivolity and licence, though she herself was an intelligent and well-informed woman, with a real feeling for art as she understood it.

The need of fresh interests and fresh ideas was making itself felt amongst the painted and powdered crowds of the court, and many of the more influential people of France were ready to welcome and assimilate the theories which flowed from the pens of Rousseau and the encyclopædists.

In his "Discourses on Art and Science," published in 1749, Rousseau had fiercely denounced all culture as proof of, and cause of corruption in society, all refinement and civilization as forms of degeneration from the primeval savage life, which, with all its ignorance and brutishness, he yet maintained was the state of simplicity and perfection.

In a like manner had Diderot and D'Alembert eulogized the homely virtues supposed to be possessed by all outside the court circle. Philosophy was the fashion, the "simple life" was a general topic of conversation and admiration, if not of actual practice, and the ground was well prepared for a painter who could place on canvas those humble scenes of family life round which so much glamour and sentiment was gathering.

This movement in the direction of simplicity Greuze later, under the guidance and influence of Diderot, greatly encouraged; and it was adopted by, and supplied a new interest for that very society which the authors had been at pains to denounce.

Such was the Paris that the young Greuze entered, bringing with him little else beyond his painting tools, his good looks, and, last but not least, an unbounded faith in himself.

The start was not an easy one. He had neither patrons nor letters of introduction; and his easily wounded vanity made more enemies for him than the envy aroused by a talent too conspicuous to allow him to be overlooked.

Arrived in Paris, Greuze immediately began to make a daily attendance at the drawing classes of the Academy, taking lessons of Natoire, and meanwhile painting numerous small pictures for the dealers, in order to provide for his fees and daily bread. His life at the Academy appears to have been punctuated by rudeness and discourtesy on his part towards his instructors, and petty annoyances and ill-received slights from his companions.

The story goes that Natoire was criticizing the drawing of some figures, whether by Greuze himself or another is not quite clear, when the young man had the effrontery to retort: "Sir, you would be glad if you could do as well!" What master could be expected to tolerate such behaviour? We are not surprised to find that one of the humiliations which annoyed Greuze most was being obliged to take the worst, or what he considered the worst, position with the model.

But Greuze was not one to suffer either long or in silence

when courage could be called upon to right matters; so, collecting his best works into a parcel, he went straight to M. Louis Sylvestre, who was then Director of the Academy and a man of great influence, to pour out his grievances.

The old man was delighted with the work brought to him, and took a fancy to the fearless young student who had asked for his help; and Greuze, with a ready talent for business, improved the situation by asking to be allowed to paint his new friend's portrait. This episode may be taken as the turning-point in his fortunes, for it was about this time that his picture "A Father of a Family reading the Bible to his Children" was purchased by M. de La Live de Jully, a rich art collector, who followed the practice of turning his house into a public gallery, visited by the world of fashion. Here the picture by the hitherto unknown artist was seen and talked about; seen, amongst others, by Diderot, who found in it an artistic work after his own heart. The result was a friendship that was to have no small influence on the work of the painter; a friendship, often jeopardized by the biting criticisms of the encyclopædist, that was to last until the death of the latter in 1784.

Another influential friend was Pigalle, the king's sculptor, who from the first had recognized and encouraged the talent of the young and unknown student.

The success of the picture seems, at the present day, quite out of proportion to its merit as a work of art; but it is necessary to remember that it represents a complete break from the then existing school of painting, at the head of which Boucher, with his elegant indecencies, was joyously depicting the loves of pagan gods and goddesses.

This artist, who had for his patron and pupil the Pompadour herself, was at the height of his popularity when Greuze was first brought before the eyes of the public by the exhibition of his "A Father of a Family reading the Bible to his Children"; and the picture, by its frank appeal to emotions hitherto unplayed upon, was quick to capture the applause of a volatile people.

Partly owing to the success of his picture, and doubtless assisted to the honour by Sylvestre, Greuze was elected in 1755 a member of the Academy, a position which carried with it the right to exhibit in the Salon. In the Salon of that year he exhibited five pictures, including that which he had already sold to M. de La Live de Jully, and his portraits of Sylvestre and of Lebas, one of the king's engravers. The other works were a study of a boy's head, and another genre picture entitled "The Blind Man Hoaxed" (*L'Aveugle trompé*).

CHAPTER II

VISIT TO ITALY

IT was a very usual practice at that time for a wealthy man, interested in *les beaux arts* and journeying to their recognized home in Italy, to take in his train some young artist who could not afford to pay for such a trip himself. The arrangement was likely to be advantageous to both parties, for the benefactor, over and above the satisfaction of rendering a service to Art, could reasonably expect to have his journey illustrated by his protégé's sketches; as well as copies made from the Old Masters. No bad bargain in pre-camera days !

In the autumn of 1755, after the close of the Salon, Greuze accepted an offer to accompany Louis Gougenot, Abbé de Chézal-Benoit, to Rome. In order to do this, leave of absence had first to be obtained from the Academy; and the permit to travel to Italy for the purpose of "acquiring new knowledge in the art of painting by studying the works of great masters" is still extant, signed by the Marquis de Marigny, brother of Madame de Pompadour.

The itinerary appears to have taken them by way of Toulouse, through Carcassonne, Lunel and Aix and Marseilles; whence they sailed to Naples, arriving in Rome at the end of January.

Here, Greuze, owing to his success in Paris, was made welcome by the French colony, presided over by M. de Stainville,

LA CRUCHE CASSÉE
(THE BROKEN PITCHER)

In the Louvre



the French Ambassador. Soon after their arrival the Abbé Gougenot received news from Paris that he had been made Honorary Associate of the Academy, a delicate, and probably not unexpected, recognition of his services in taking Greuze to Italy. While in Rome together, Jean-Baptiste painted the abbé's portrait. By the end of May the good abbé wished to return to France and expected to take his tame artist back with him, but Greuze was not ready to come, and if one may judge from some of the entries in the abbé's note book, the new Honorary Associate cannot have been altogether sorry to be relieved of his charge, for he had found Greuze both capricious and expensive. The lack of sympathy between the two was widened by Greuze failing to arrive at any understanding or appreciation of the great masters, after travelling so far to study them; though to study these more intimately was the plea put forward for remaining behind in Rome, Greuze saying adroitly, that "since the Academy had done him the honour of receiving him, he felt that he ought to recognize their kindness by making fresh efforts."

The Abbé Barthélemy, himself a member of the Academy, had become acquainted with Greuze through Gougenot, and was so impressed by this estimable sentiment that in writing to the Comte de Caylus in Paris, he asks him to make the Marquis de Marigny acquainted with it, in order that no misunderstanding should arise from Jean-Baptiste's failure to return with Gougenot.

Greuze had another friend in Rome, a fellow student, the lively Fragonard, who had been rejected as pupil in turn by Boucher and Chardin. On being taken back finally by Boucher,

Fragonard rewarded him by turning out to be one of his best pupils. Fragonard, or Frago, as he was known to his intimates, had won the *Prix de Rome* three years previously, but the royal coffers were so impoverished that his journey to the Eternal City had to be postponed, and he had arrived only a few months before Greuze.

A piece of good fortune justified our artist's decision to remain in Rome, for the ambassador, de Stainville, better known afterwards as the Duc de Choiseul, was so taken with Jean-Baptiste's work that he commissioned him to paint portraits of himself and his wife, the dainty little lady whose charm and grace had even received a tribute of admiration and praise from Horace Walpole. This commission brought public appreciation as well as a letter of introduction to the Duc dell'Orr . . . a member of the Roman nobility and a widower whose only child, a beautiful girl of eighteen, had a gift for painting.

The duke, wishing to gratify this talent, engaged the good-looking young painter to give lessons to his daughter. His pride of family seems to have made him singularly obtuse; the possibility of the master losing his heart to his pupil may have occurred to her father, but presumably he judged, and as it turned out, rightly, that if the disparity in age was not in itself a barrier—Greuze was then over thirty—the young man would not presume so far to forget his place, as to make love to the Princess Lætitia. That the princess should commit the indiscretion of regarding the painter as anything more than a piece of furniture in the palace, was, of course, unthinkable. The young lady, whose chaperone was her old nurse, committed, however, the unthinkable indiscretion and fell in love with her

drawing master. This time the romance is disclosed, not by some peeping miss, but by the hero of the story—for so he regards himself—relating the events in his declining years to the young girls who were his pupils, as an example of disinterested love.

Greuze tells how, by many unmistakable signs, he discovered that his young princess was in love with him, and as he already adored her, all would have been well had it not been for their relative positions of birth and fortune.

Greuze, with commendable prudence and foresight, resolved to discontinue his visits to the palace, although separation from the object of his love and adoration caused him so much pain, that his self-control was insufficient to prevent him losing all interest in his work; his gloom and depression exposed him to the laughing comments of his fellow students, for they soon got an inkling of the matter, Fragonard dubbing him, "The cherub in love."

Meantime, Lætitia repined until she became really ill, and her friends were mystified as to the cause of her indisposition; while Greuze was made even more miserable by hearing of her state of health. Then a further burden was put upon him by the duke, her father, who all unaware of the cause of the trouble, and coming across the young painter unexpectedly, reproached him for staying away from the palace so long; he told Greuze moreover, that he needed him to copy two lately acquired pictures by Titian, as he wished to give the copies to a relative as soon as possible. The duke pressed the matter, and Greuze not wishing to offend so good a patron, and always weak where a woman was concerned, gave in. He was soon working under

the same roof as his beloved, although her illness confined her to her room.

Acting, doubtless, from no worse motive than that of securing her young mistress's happiness, the old nurse begins to act as go-between; starting as the receiver of polite inquiries and bearer of messages of condolence on the ill health of her young mistress, she ends by arranging a meeting between the lovers. A detailed account of this meeting is given by Madame de Valori, and we note that the first avowals of affection come from Lœtitia, though Greuze is not long in admitting his love for her. Lœtitia, who after all was little more than a child, and a spoilt one too, unfolds a plan she has carefully made, and is delighted with imagining she will secure for their romance the happy ending of a fairy tale; the only thing wanting for the scheme was the assurance that Greuze loved her and that assurance she now had from his own lips.

Her father, she knew, had two possible suitors for her in his mind, one she had seen and referred to as old and ugly, the second she had not yet seen, and was not interested in, as she wished to marry Greuze. In order to do this, she proposes to give him all her fortune, which had come to her through her mother; Greuze, thus enriched, could marry her, take her to Paris, and there continue his artistic career and become famous.

Who can blame the master-tiler's son, when for the moment, intoxicated by so alluring a dream, he assented, and the interview ended in happiness and contentment? But no sooner had Greuze left the palace than the cold light of reason was brought to bear upon the delightful vision, and our artist was beset with

grave and increasing misgivings; before many hours were over he found himself more unhappy than he had ever been before. He tells how he brooded over the terrible effect of the father's wrath on Lætitia, picturing her cut off for ever from parental affection by her rash deed; and, it may well be imagined that by this time his head was cool enough to see himself the recipient of the lion's share of this wrath. The prospect, whichever way he looked at it, was not pleasing, and he finally made up his mind to go to Lætitia and tell her he would not accept her sacrifice. This he did without delay, but it was one thing to convince the princess that her plans were not to be thought of, and still another to tell the beautiful creature that he did not love her; this, Greuze could not bring himself to do; it was not true, and he would not have wished the lady to believe it. The interview ended with no definite issue.

Finding that all his good sense and honourable resolutions, so strong when he was absent from her, melted the moment he set eyes on his beloved, Greuze, ostrich-like, took to his bed and feigned illness as an excuse to keep away from the palace, and so effectually had his peace of mind been upset, that he really became ill with fever and remained in bed for about three weeks.

Three weeks is a long time in the life of a young girl, and in the meantime Lætitia's father had entered into negotiations with the Count Palleri, the suitor neither old nor ugly, whom Lætitia had not seen nor wished to see.

By the time Greuze had recovered from his illness and was ready to resume his work at the palace, the arrival of the Count Palleri was imminent. Madame de Valori tells how Greuze persuaded the young princess to see this suitor for her hand, and

to give the matter her careful consideration; we may be sure she did not need his advice to do this, for in the eighteenth century, young girls in her position were not supposed to have much freedom of choice in the matter of matrimony, and to refuse to see the suitor of her father's providing could not be done without good reason being offered. Doubtless, Lætitia was well aware that even if she could bring herself to admit the real reason of her repugnance to the suggested bridegroom, her father would not have accepted it.

When the Count Palleri did arrive, Lætitia found him by no means unattractive; he was handsome, rich, and above all, interested in art. Certainly the matter was one for serious consideration. If Greuze were ready to fly with her, her heart was his and nothing would deter her, but if he would not consent to do this, then this suitor would do as well as another, in fact rather better. If she refused him, her father had the elderly and ugly one to fall back on, and Lætitia realized the possibility of falling between two stools. If Greuze did but say the word, she was his; but Greuze did not say the word, and in due course the marriage contract between Lætitia and the Count Palleri was signed.

Greuze was introduced to the count, who praised his painting and expressed a wish that he should paint a portrait of the princess for him. Lætitia's father gave the commission, and the pupil sat for her portrait. We may be sure that Greuze did not relish the idea of painting this portrait for his rival, and was pleased when the duke proposed to keep the picture for himself, and give his prospective son-in-law a portrait painted a few months previously by another artist.

A GIRL WITH DOVES

In the Wallace Collection

Exhibited at the Salon, 1800, under the title of *L'Innocence tenant deux pigeons*



Greuze secretly made a sketch for himself, and used it later in his *L'Embarras d'une Couronne*; this painting, under the title of "The Votive offering to Cupid" (*L'Offrande à l'Amour*), is now to be seen in the Wallace Collection.

The picture represents a young girl in pseudo-classic dress kneeling at the base of a pedestal on which stands a little statue of Cupid holding a crown of leaves. The girl is a brunette and her head is a different type from that usually selected by Greuze as his model. The figure of the girl is awkwardly posed and we feel that the artist has deliberately risked the suggestion of instability in order to show the face and shoulders of his model, placing her at the same time in such a position that the god of love appears to be in the act of crowning her with the wreath. In the foreground are a pair of doves, a gold vase, and some flowers, the votive offering which gives its name to the picture.

Diderot in writing of this painting praises the head of the young girl, but is very severe on the rest of the composition. This he criticizes in detail and finds little to praise.

The painting of the portrait and its resultant intimacy must have been but a bitter sweet happiness to the lovers, and our sympathy goes with Greuze, when as soon as the portrait was complete, he fled back to France.

Some eight years afterwards Greuze had news of his princess. She was then happily married and the mother of five children, and later on he received a letter from her, expressing gratitude for his behaviour in Italy. Her gratitude appears to have taken the tangible form of allowing herself to be the confidant of the troubles of his married life, at that time beginning to manifest

themselves, and the letters she wrote were the beginning of a correspondence ending only with her death—a loss that Greuze appears to have felt acutely.

Such was the romantic love story told by Greuze to his pupils, and, even if the facts were a little coloured by time, and Jean-Baptiste's renunciation sprang from nothing more noble than prudence and worldly wisdom, the story is to his credit, and it might have been otherwise.

The sojourn of two years in Italy produced little effect upon the work of Greuze. The paintings of the masters of the Italian School, both new and old, failed to inspire him—the antique had no message for him, and there is no evidence in his painting that the glories of ancient Roman architecture were anything but a dead letter to him.

Greuze pursued the same course of study in Italy that he had followed in his native land. He sought his models and his inspirations mostly amongst the people in his own station of life, and this is the more surprising when one bears in mind that Greuze had the *entrée* into palaces, and as a portrait painter he had ample opportunity of comparing his high-born sitters and their surroundings with the models he chose for his genre pictures.

The paintings he exhibited in the Salon of 1757, on his return to Paris, are the only ones that bear evidence of any definite influence due to his visit to Italy, and they could hardly do otherwise, as they were mostly painted during his stay there. If we may judge from his picture *La Paresseuse Italienne* ("The Lazy Italian"), some of his impressions of Italian peasant life were not altogether favourable. This canvas presents a fat

Italian woman of the peasant class, in unpleasing deshabelle, seated on a low chair in a slovenly kitchen. The picture is well named, and we feel that even if the model were placed in different surroundings we should know her still for the lazy slut the painter intends us to find her, but there is nothing typically Italian about the woman except her surroundings.

Another picture, *Les Œufs Cassés* ("The Broken Eggs") won for the painter many favourable comments. It is best described by the title, written by the painter himself. "A mother scolding a young man for upsetting a basket of eggs which the servant has just brought from market, whilst a child is trying to mend one of the broken eggs."

Greuze always took himself and his paintings very seriously, and the long titles he so often used for his pictures suggest a fear lest his work should be misinterpreted or some detail overlooked. A misinterpretation might be possible here, for the maidservant sitting with her back to the elder woman and the young man, appears to be in such a state of sulky indifference that the old lady's railings might have been intended for her, and the young man has quite the appearance of interceding on her behalf. Whichever way we take it, the picture has a certain touch of reality, and this was likely to make it popular with the Parisians of that day.

Another painting in the Salon of that year, *Le Geste Napolitain* ("The Neapolitan Gesture") represents a young Italian woman dismissing her lover disguised as a pedlar. The lover has been recognized by the maidservant. The whole composition is somewhat theatrical in conception, but the figure of the young lady is graceful and charming.

The other pictures which Greuze exhibited in the same Salon were *Un Oiseleur accordant sa guitare*, *Un Matelot Napolitain*, and a sketch in Chinese ink of two Italians playing. He also exhibited two portraits, one being that of his friend Pigalle, the sculptor.

CHAPTER III

EARLY MARRIED LIFE

ON the Quai St. Augustine, on the left bank of the Seine was a bookseller's shop, kept by a man named Babuti. No doubt it was a very good book-shop, and certainly it seems to have been a popular resort with Diderot and his friends. Its attraction was due at any rate in part, to the fact that M. Babuti had a daughter, and this daughter attended to the shop and its customers. M. Babuti was fortunate, for Anne Gabrielle, his daughter, was a good woman of business, quick at figures, and added to these useful qualities were personal beauty and ready wit. Diderot confesses that he himself was in love with her at one time, and describes her as "white and slender as a lily, red as a rose." But we need no written description of her. Greuze has immortalized her for us on his best known canvases. The "Greuze Girl" is a type, and Anne Gabrielle was the incarnation of that type. Greuze had made the acquaintance of M. Babuti's book-shop and the charming Anne Gabrielle before he went to Italy, and on his return to Paris went to look for the little library, the rendezvous of his friends. This had moved in his absence to the Rue St. Jacques.

Anne Gabrielle had not lost her youthful beauty during the two years he had been away, and, moreover, she was frankly pleased to see him. Greuze was losing no time in idleness on his return from Italy, and was hard at work in the galleries of

the Luxembourg studying the works of Rubens, a master who never ceased to inspire him. The Flemish School had always many lessons for Greuze, while the Italian held nothing for him. Greuze also spent a good deal of time wandering about the streets of Paris, seeking for models and subjects for pictures. It is not surprising, therefore, that his wanderings should have taken him pretty often to the book-shop in Rue St. Jacques, for there was a face there with a great attraction for him as an artist, and he was always sure of a welcome from its owner.

Jean-Baptiste did not go to the Rue St. Jacques to make love to Anne Gabrielle, he went because he derived pleasure from looking at her, and Anne Gabrielle, well aware of it, was not ill-pleased with the attention. Greuze was still poor, but bade fair to become both rich and famous; he possessed also a moderate share of good looks and was quite worth considering as a husband. It is said that Mlle. Babuti was thirty years old (not easy to believe) when she made up her mind to become Madame Greuze.

Our artist had no mind to burden himself with a wife he was unable to support, but Anne Gabrielle was a clever woman as well as a pretty one, and moreover, was not hindered by an excess of modesty. One day the friendly caller was startled by the unexpected question "Monsieur Greuze, would you marry me if I would consent to be your wife?" An emphatic negative might have settled the matter for ever, but Greuze could not say "no" to a pretty woman, and sought refuge in an evasive answer. His reply of "Mademoiselle, who would not be happy to pass their life with anyone so amiable," does not suggest fervour, but it was quite enough for Mlle. Babuti. The next

day she purchased for herself and appeared with a pair of large imitation diamond earrings, and curious inquirers were informed that they were a present from Monsieur Greuze, to whom she was engaged to be married.

On hearing this, Greuze followed the same tactics he had adopted with Lœtitia, absented himself from the book-shop and shut himself up in his studio with his work.

On this occasion, however, he was not dealing with a sentimental motherless princess, but with a very determined young woman with a mother to aid and abet her strategies.

The artist's lodging at that time was in the Hôtel des Vignes, in the Faubourg St. Germain, and one day he was surprised by a loud knocking at his door, followed by more noise and kicks when he failed to open it. Driven at last to do so from fear of attracting the attention of the other occupants of the house, he found Mlle. Babuti accompanied by her maidservant. Once across the threshold, remonstrances, tears and protestations followed, and it was almost inevitable that beauty in distress should gain the day. Anne Gabrielle departed satisfied with a promise of matrimony. To make all safe, she at once announced to everyone that she and Greuze were already married though there is no evidence of any ceremony having taken place until two years later, when the marriage was registered at St. Médard, which they appear to have chosen instead of their own parish church to avoid the comments of their friends who believed them to be already married.

The story of this strange courtship comes like the romance of Lœtitia from the artist himself, and was told years after he had lost all trace of affection for his wife; a certain amount

of allowance may be made for the colour added by time and disillusion.

The young couple began housekeeping with only a few livres, but there is no doubt that the first years of matrimony were very happy. Greuze was proud of his wife and loved to paint her, and Madame Greuze for her part was pleased to be painted, and was flattered by her husband's admiration and devotion. It was during the early years of his married life that Greuze painted most of the charming heads of young girls so well known to us.

It is a common complaint against this artist that he painted the heads of children, whilst the shoulders and necks of his models belonged to fully developed women.

The reason is not hard to find. Anne Gabrielle was often his model, and the painter was not likely to minimize the youthfulness of her lovely child-like face, but he was equally anxious to paint her beautiful shoulder and bosom, and goes out of his way to disarrange the drapery of the corsage in order to accomplish his object.

Greuze, by this time had made quite a number of friends; his generosity and real kindness manifested themselves as he became more prosperous and overcame in a great measure the antagonistic feelings he persistently stirred up by his touchiness and vanity.

Amongst his friends he was able to reckon the German engraver, Wille, who, poor and friendless, had crossed the path of Diderot, and by him been introduced to Greuze.

The friendship which ensued was a mutual advantage. The engraver was delighted with the beautiful heads, which came so

readily from the painter's brush, and not only bought and engraved his friend's drawings but sang their praises to all who would listen, and by introducing Greuze to the German market did much towards spreading the fame of the painter over Europe. The sketches generously given by Greuze from time to time to his friend were also engraved and sold well, to the benefit of the engraver, bringing Greuze at the same time before a large circle of admirers—many of them without any other opportunity of seeing or buying his work. In after years the sale of engravings played no small part in the artist's income.

As an act of friendship, Greuze also received the engraver's son, Pierre Alexandre Wille, into his studio as a pupil. Pierre Alexandre arrived bearing a silver coffee-pot for Madame Greuze, who, doubtless, appreciated the attention.

In 1765 Greuze exhibited in the Salon a fine painting of Wille. This is considered one of the artist's best portraits.

Never naturally idle, matrimony seems to have acted as a stimulant to the industry of Greuze. With a willing model whom he never tired of studying, always at hand, Greuze produced a large number of paintings.

In the Salon of 1759 he exhibited no fewer than sixteen paintings besides two sketches in Chinese ink. One of these paintings, *Le Repos*, is accompanied by the inevitable explanatory title, so beloved by Greuze. He tells us that the picture is "a woman imposing silence on her son, and showing him the other children who are asleep." The explanation is quite unnecessary. The disappointed look on the face of the small boy, stopped in the act of blowing upon a little trumpet, the disapproval expressed

by the mother, holding one chubby sleeping infant on her lap and pointing with her free hand to the other sleeper in a chair, leave no opening for doubt as to the meaning of the picture.

Another painting, *La Simplicité*, or as it is sometimes known, "The Young Widow," represents a young girl with a black veil; this covers her head, but fails to perform the same office for her bosom which is inadequately covered by her dress. This picture attracted a good deal of attention at the time, for Madame de Pompadour expressed a wish to buy it. The owner—for it had already found a purchaser—feeling that so great a lady should not be denied, readily relinquished her possession and Greuze painted another picture from the same model, with a different background for his accommodating patroness.

Greuze exhibited several portraits at this Salon, and it is interesting to note that one was his father-in-law, M. Babuti, the bookseller. In 1761 (the Salon was held every two years) we again find Greuze exhibiting a portrait of his father-in-law, and also one of himself. Madame Greuze too is painted in the singularly unsuitable character of "A Vestal." His fourth portrait of that year is no less a personage than M. le Dauphin. Apropos of this picture an improbable little story is often quoted. It is said that the Dauphin was so pleased with his portrait that he was anxious for Greuze to paint the Dauphine, but that when Greuze attended the court for the purpose of an interview with the princess he begged to be excused, and declared that he "did not know how to paint that kind of head" (*parce-que ajouta t-il, Je ne sçais point peindre de pareilles têtes*). Marie Joséfa, was not beautiful, but is usually spoken of as pleasing. It is inconceivable that Greuze or any other painter, however

ridiculous the Dauphine may have appeared in her powder and paint, would have dared to refuse the commission or to make such a remark—it sounds rather like the vain boast of a man who would have liked to have given this expression to his thoughts had it been safe to do so.

The genre picture of this same year, known as *L'Accordée de Village*, shows us a father paying the dowry of his daughter. In spite of the fact that the canvas is crowded (there are twelve figures besides a hen and chickens occupying the foreground), it is one of Greuze's most successful compositions. The principal figure, the old father, bearing a striking likeness to the parent in Greuze's first picture, "A Father of a Family reading the Bible to his Children," has just handed over a leather bag containing his daughter's dowry to the fiancé. The girl herself is a pretty and rather pathetically self-conscious little figure, with one arm slipped through that of her future husband, whilst the other is clasped by a younger sister and by her mother who is seated on a chair opposite the father. The notary and brothers and sisters of various ages complete the group. Greuze was still at work on this picture when the Salon of 1761 opened, and it was only completed in time to be shown for the last six days, but its success was enormous. Diderot was delighted with it, and wrote a long and detailed account of it, partaking more of the nature of a flattering description than a friendly criticism.

When the Salon was closed the picture passed into the possession of M. de Marigny, and at his death became the property of M. de Menais, and sold by him to the king in 1782. During the next four years it seemed that Jean-Baptiste's popularity was assured, and in 1763 and 1765 he was well

represented at the Salon. Apart from his exhibited works he seems to have been constantly busy with commissions for portraits and other pictures.

Like many another artist, Greuze was indolent in money matters, and was well content to leave his business affairs in the hands of his wife, even leaving her to fix the prices of his pictures and engravings. Such an arrangement should have worked out well, for an artist does not do his best work when thinking of pounds, shillings, and pence, and it is well if he can trust someone to relieve him of these considerations. In this case, Anne Gabrielle, with her business knowledge, was surely the right person for this office, and all might have been well if she had been a different woman and had loved her husband as much as she loved his money.

The couple had three children, and it is with some dismay that we learn that the wife of the painter of domestic virtues followed the custom prevailing amongst the well-to-do, and put her children out to nurse. We read of a little pleasure party in the autumn of 1763, when Greuze and his wife, accompanied by Wille the engraver, and Doyen, the painter, rode out in a hired carriage to Champigny to visit one of the nurselings. In fact, there is no evidence that Greuze could, at any time, find under his own roof those examples of the simple joys of family life that his canvases would have us believe surrounded him. On looking at the picture of a mother leaving her baby, who is about to be taken away to its foster mother, the suspicion arises that Madame Greuze never felt so much emotion as that depicted in the agonized parting; Greuze calls the painting *La Privation Sensible*, but probably the sentiment is entirely his

own. Greuze was undoubtedly fond of his children, but Anne Gabrielle seems to have taken little interest in them. One of the three children died early, and the two little girls, Anne Geneviève and Louise Gabrielle, were sent away to a convent by a mother caring nothing for religion. They remained there for eleven or twelve years. On one of Jean-Baptiste's frequent visits to his little daughters they complain that it is a year and seven days since they had seen their mother. Yet in the Salon of 1765 Greuze takes the mother as model for the sketch of the picture *La Mère bien-aimée*. The picture itself was exhibited in the year 1767, and shows us the "Beloved Mother" lying back in her chair surrounded by half a dozen children, who seem to be overpowering her with their demonstrations of affection. The youngest is in her arms with its chubby little hands clinging to her neck, and she is unable to escape from its embraces, for her head is being held from behind by an older boy who is kissing her forehead, and has climbed on the table the better to accomplish his object; two children are contending for possession of her left arm; whilst her right is pressed gently and affectionately by a little girl, apparently older than the rest; a small boy has thrust himself between his mother's knees, and holds on to her right hand. The grandmother, seated on a low chair with her feet on a footstool, is finding great enjoyment in the scene, but the mother's natural air of happy weariness makes one welcome the ninth figure in the composition. It is that of the husband and happy father of this somewhat oppressive little crowd, a young, manly figure evidently just returned from hunting, for he bears his gun in his hand and is accompanied by two dogs—a little hint from the painter that

he is showing us simple country life, away from the wickedness of cities. Another figure, probably that of the maid opening the door, a complacent cat and litter of children's toys complete the picture.

The painting was intended by Greuze to tell the story of domestic happiness, and it accomplished its mission. Diderot naturally was enraptured with it and describes it as "excellent from both the technical and moral standpoint. Preaching the gospel of large families and presenting with much pathos the happiness, the inestimable blessing of domestic peace." Madame Geoffrin, from whom Greuze had received much kindness, wittily described this picture as "a fricassée of children"; the remark, really very harmless, was repeated to Greuze; the painter was furious and went about telling his friends that he would like to paint her as a schoolmistress, whip in hand, in order that she would be handed down as a terror to succeeding generations of children. Greuze plainly had little or no sense of humour, and considered his pictures too serious a subject for witticisms. Long before *La Mère bien-aimée* was exhibited, Greuze and his wife had ceased to live happily together. There is no doubt that the poor man deplored the absence of his children; no one could have drawn and painted children as Greuze did without being fond of them, but this deprivation would not have provided sufficient cause of estrangement, for Greuze, an affectionate man, was really fond of his wife.

The fact is, increasing prosperity did not suit Anne Gabrielle; in her husband's studio she was seen and admired. Too much flattery turned her head, and the absence of family cares led her into lazy and extravagant habits.

he painted home scenes well, although he did not have one of his own

THE HEAD OF A GIRL

In the National Gallery



There were many wealthy visitors to the studio, so it is hardly to be wondered at that Madame Greuze should be led to change her style of dress, and begin to have bills with expensive dress-makers. It was useless for her husband to remonstrate and point out to her that they had no settled income, and that it was foolish to use the money as fast as it was earned. Greuze, himself, was careful of his appearance and did not wish his wife to be ill-dressed, but Anne Gabrielle had lofty notions on the subject and would not be denied; she knew too much about the large sums of money paid for her husband's work to believe there was any need for economy. Also, when Madame Greuze did not get what she wanted a fine show of bad temper was the result, and Greuze needed peace.

In consequence of his wife's demands Greuze worked still harder; commissions were plentiful then, and the more time he spent at his easel the less time he had to look over his accounts. When time allowed, and he did look into them, discrepancies were apparent, but Madame Greuze would not have her book-keeping criticized, so for the sake of peace, Jean-Baptiste would capitulate.

The almost unchecked handling of her husband's money, and the real indolence Greuze showed in all matters of business, did Anne Gabrielle much harm. It is said, she added gambling to her other extravagances; and it certainly appears that she got through a great deal of money, falsifying her accounts to make good her losses; and still Greuze continued to leave his business transactions in her hands, and long after he must have known she was not to be trusted Anne Gabrielle is writing to his customers arranging terms with a shrewdness and

commercial acumen, surprising to find in the owner of that pretty, indolent face.

Some of Anne Gabrielle's letters are still extant. They are very firm and businesslike, but always courteous and respectful, and on reading them it may be admitted that Greuze was justified in leaving letter-writing in her hands. For courtesy and respect were not qualities with which he was largely endowed.

CHAPTER IV

THE BREAK WITH THE ACADEMY

ALTHOUGH Greuze had been made *agrée* of the Academy in 1755, he had failed to comply with the rule requiring a new associate to submit an important picture to the Academicians before they could elect him to full membership.

The picture thus submitted indicated the branch of painting in which the artist hoped to excel. The immediate departure of Greuze to Italy, after his first election, was sufficient reason for omitting to fulfil this condition, and possibly the permit granted to allow him to study in Italy covered this matter also. But time passed, and every two years Greuze hung his pictures in the Salon without being really entitled to do so, for he had no recognized status in the Academy. The omission was overlooked at first, but when polite reminders were persistently ignored, Greuze, in 1767, received a letter, couched in quite friendly terms from the secretary of the Academy, telling him that as he had failed to comply with the Academy's rules he would not be allowed the privilege of exhibiting his pictures in the Salon that year.

The Academicians were more than justified in taking this course; they had allowed Greuze over ten years' grace, and repeatedly had reminded him. But Jean-Baptiste, with characteristic vanity, felt himself too great a man to be treated in this way;

instead of hastening to submit his picture or apologize and ask for a little more time, Greuze wrote a rude reply to the Academicians. It is a pity that the artist was not at that time on the old terms with his wife; Anne Gabrielle would surely have been more diplomatic in her writing; but Greuze wrote the letter himself, and Diderot, on seeing it afterwards, and also the letter from the Academicians, describes that of Greuze as "a model of vanity and impertinence." So far from helping him at this juncture, Greuze believed afterwards that his wife had helped to stir up the Academicians against him.

It seems strange that Greuze who had painted so many successful pictures, could not have submitted one to the Academy. He could not have thought on his return from Italy that he was already so great a painter that he might well be exempted from a rule applying to all other artists; neither was laziness at the root of the trouble. Greuze was not lazy. The truth was, Greuze believed that he was intended to be a great historical painter, and hoped as such to be elected by the Academy; even so may a successful comedian imagine himself a great exponent of tragedy if "he had his chance." We might multiply examples in every profession.

Probably Greuze saw himself taking the world of art by storm when he launched his famous historical painting, but in the meantime he did not paint it or any other picture that might have been a preparation for it.

To please Diderot and his set, he painted genre pictures preaching a moral, to please himself he painted charming heads of young girls; and to please his patrons, to fill the family coffers, and we hope also to please himself, he painted portraits. There

was little time left to make the necessary studies for an important historical composition, and Greuze was not the man for this type of picture. His education and upbringing had not fitted him for it, and if his talents had lain in that direction he was too strong a character not to have developed them earlier.

Greuze did not want to break with the Academy, and not wishing to be denied the privilege of exhibiting his pictures in the Academy another year, set to work to produce his masterpiece. It was unfortunate that he should have postponed it to the time when his work was being interfered with by domestic troubles. An atmosphere of distrust and disturbance is not congenial for the production of monumental work ; and, added to other discomforts, Greuze was worried about money matters ; for by this time his wife was spending and losing the larger part of his earnings, and he had to work hard at the kind of painting that came most easily to him and could be readily turned into money in order to avoid being ruined by her excesses. Taking all things into consideration, it is not surprising that when the great historical painting was finished it was pronounced a failure by all except the artist himself.

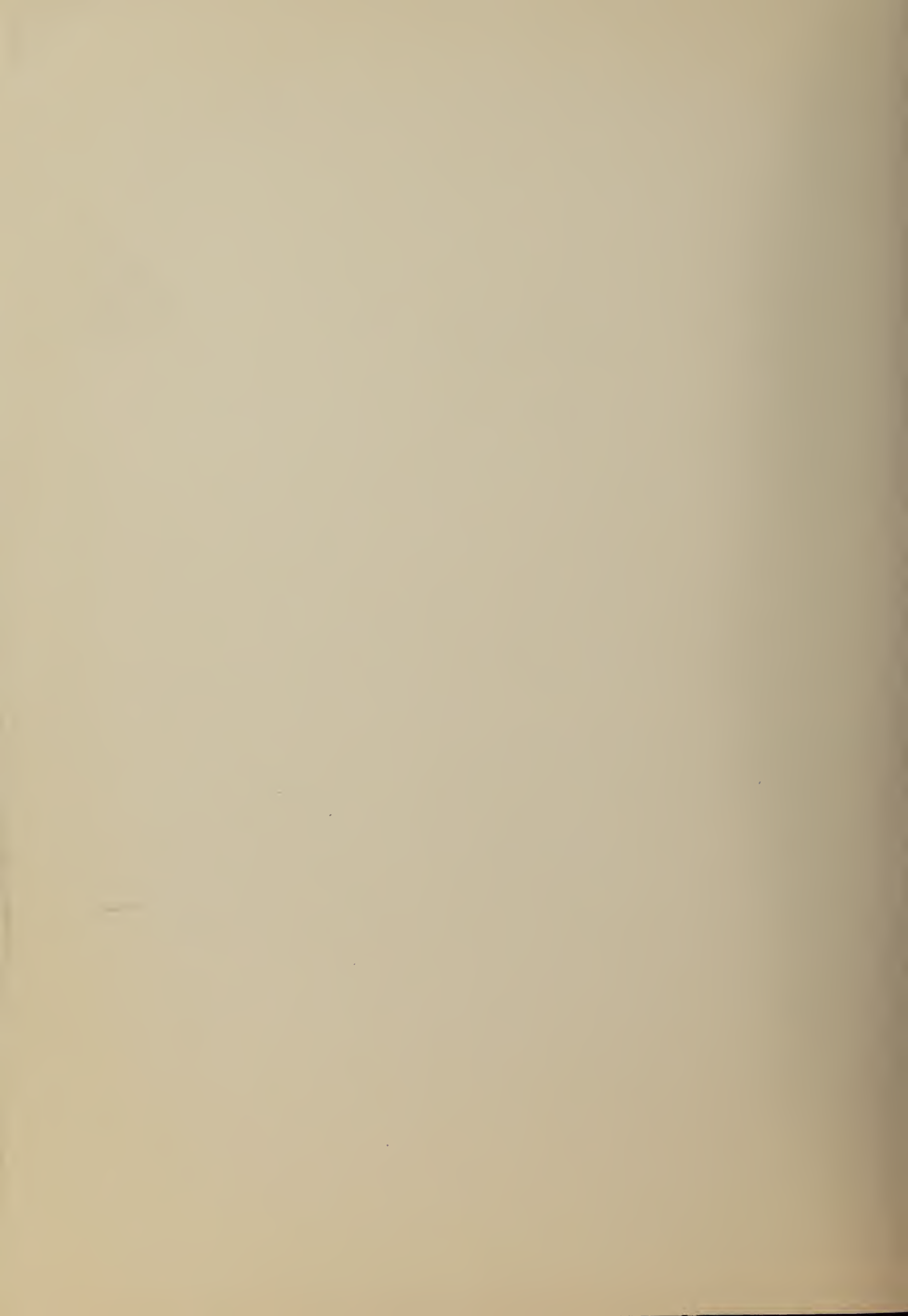
Whether Greuze really was satisfied with his work it is impossible to say, but the fact remains that he sent it to the Academicians as his representative work, and on its merits expected to be elected as a painter of historical subjects. Greuze apparently had no suspicion that he could fail to be so elected ; he had complied with the Academy's rule and had sent a painting ; the subject of the painting was historical, what more was needed for an artist of his standing ? He had forgotten his really insolent procrastination aggravated by the impertinent letter, and

it never seems to have occurred to him that the Academicians might in consequence be a little more severe in their criticism of the picture they had waited for so long. The painting did not meet with the approval of the Academicians, and they would have been within their rights if they had refused the dignity of membership to the painter. If they had done so, an outcry of injustice might have been raised, for Greuze was now a very popular artist, and moreover his paintings attracted many visitors to the Salon. So the Academicians decided to ignore entirely the merits, or rather demerits, of the historical picture, and on account of his good work already exhibited in the Salon to elect Greuze as a painter of genre pictures and portraits. By so doing they excluded him from ever attaining a professorship. These lucrative posts always passed into the hands of historical painters. The picture thus passed over, represented Septimus Severus reproaching his son Caracalla for having attempted his life in the defiles of Scotland.

Unlike most of his compositions, Greuze has here executed great restraint in the number of figures employed and has avoided all the unnecessary accessories which he loved to scatter in the foreground of his paintings. The sick emperor has raised himself up on the bed upon which he is resting, and his right arm is extended towards Caracalla, who is standing at the foot of the bed. With his left hand Severus points to a sword lying on the table at his side. The pose of the emperor lacks dramatic force; no one wishing to emphasize his words by employing his hands would use both hands for separate actions at the same time. Apart from this, the figure is anatomically incorrect, the arm extended towards the son being especially weak

LA LAITIÈRE
(THE MILKMAID)

In the Louvre





in drawing. The figures of Papinian and a senator, standing behind the head of the emperor's bed, as well as the figure of Caracalla, are uninteresting and conventional in pose, though the heads are good. The colour is poor, and taken as a whole is not worth looking for in the Louvre where it now hangs.

Greuze knew nothing of the decision of the Academicians until after he had gone through the formalities forming part of the ceremony of the reception of an Academician. When he learnt the terms on which he had been admitted his rage and humiliation knew no bounds. The unhappy man seems to have quite lost his head ; he even attempted to argue the matter with the assembled members, but they held to their decision. Had Greuze been wise he would have removed the canvas and destroyed it, certainly it was a great mistake to exhibit it in the Salon of that year, and to take up cudgels for it in the public Press, thereby drawing attention to its faults. By doing so, Greuze makes one incline to the theory that he was blind to its shortcomings. Many of his friends had seen and highly approved of his sketch for this picture ; and Diderot, who severely criticized the painting when hung in the Salon, had written to Falconet praising this preliminary sketch and predicting great things for the finished work.

On the strength of these favourable opinions and his general popularity, if Greuze could have destroyed his canvas in the first flush of anger he might have won the day ; for acclaimed the victim of an intolerable injustice, the Academicians might well have been driven by public opinion to re-elect him as an historical painter. It has been said, however, that Greuze had his hand forced, and that he was not allowed to withdraw his

picture. Anyway, it was exhibited in the Salon of that year, and the painter's detailed and childish persistent defence of it only called down upon it fresh criticism. Beside the canvas which was the subject of so much controversy and ill-feeling Greuze exhibited thirteen other paintings. These included *La Mère bien-aimée*, and *La Jeune Fille qui fait sa prière au pied de l'autel de l'Amour*, painted from his sketch of Lætitia.

Although most of these pictures received their meed of praise, Greuze was so incensed with the Academicians that after this year he turned his back on the Salon and exhibited there no more until after the Revolution, when the organization of the Academy was changed and trouble and poverty forbade Greuze neglect any possible means of selling his work.

After his quarrel with the Academy, Greuze left Paris and went on a visit to some friends in Angers, where he stayed for some months. During his absence he painted several pictures, including a fine portrait of Madame de Porcin, now in the Museum at Angers.

When Greuze returned to Paris he had frequent exhibitions in his own studio, and thus compensated himself for the loss of wall space in the Salon, which, after all, was held only once in two years.

In this way, many important pictures not mentioned in the lists of exhibits in the Salon passed into the hands of collectors. These collectors, with their increasing interest in the now popular artist, vied with each other to secure his canvases as they were finished, and this competition helped considerably to augment their value.

The Duchesse de Grammont was a constant visitor at the studio and purchased *Le Baiser Envoyé* as a New Year's present for her brother the Duc de Choiseul. The duke already possessed the "Votive Offering to Cupid" and many smaller examples of the artist's work.

The duke's new possession represented a young and beautiful woman leaning from a window, hung with rich curtains, and in the act of throwing a kiss to her lover. The lady is not of the humble and virtuous class generally to be found on our artist's canvases, although the sleeve of her dress is identical with that worn by the fiancée in *L'Accordée de Village*, "The Milkmaid," and by many other maidens in a humble walk of life.

The picture was engraved by Gaillard under the title of *La Voluptueuse*, the title of one word containing the essence of the flowery praises lavished on this painting by the encyclopædist. The picture was sold to the duchess for 2500 francs, and eventually passed into the possession of Mr. Alfred de Rothschild. The exquisite portrait of the Marquise de Chauvelin also found a home in this collection. In spite of the interest they aroused, Greuze had more difficulty in finding purchasers for his moral melodramas. This may have been partly due to the high prices asked for them on account of the number of figures they contained and the amount of work involved.

The *Paralytique* created a sensation when it was first exhibited, and Greuze was put to the expense of packing it up and sending it to the court at Versailles, where it failed to find an admirer with sufficient money to purchase it. After remaining on the painter's hands for a couple of years the picture was finally bought for the Empress of Russia.

In the meantime matters were going from bad to worse in the painter's own home. Not content with bringing her husband to the brink of ruin with her dishonesty and extravagance, Anne Gabrielle completed the destruction of his peace of mind by giving him cause for jealousy.

Madame Greuze, in and about her husband's studio, won a great deal of admiration and plenty of compliments, and she was not likely to be without admirers among the rich amateurs who came to see and to buy pictures. It was one of these amateurs, M. d'Azincourt, whom Greuze accuses of being the first to cause disorder in his house. The infidelity of Madame Greuze was soon common knowledge, and the painter himself was not ignorant. But Anne Gabrielle easily changed her lover for another, and a young lad, one of her husband's pupils was the next to fall a victim to her charms. In this case Greuze acted promptly. Madame Greuze threw all the blame upon the pupil and he was instantly dismissed. The matter was hushed up and the boy's father undertook that 2000 francs should be paid to Anne Gabrielle at his death. This took place very soon afterwards, and Madame Greuze purchased a carriage, a luxury she had demanded in vain of her husband. Ever since he had been made *agrée* of the Academy, Greuze had expected to have apartments in the Louvre assigned to him, but the authorities were as procrastinating in conferring this honour as Greuze himself had been in sending in his picture, and it was not until 1769 that apartments were found for him. The privilege was not to be enjoyed for long. Madame Greuze continued to provide material for scandal, and her loose morals became the gossip of the artistic society of Paris. So Greuze resolved to withdraw

from the centre of that little world, and temporarily resigned his apartments in the Louvre, asking in lieu of them a small pension. He gave as his reason that the rooms had insufficient light, and thoughtfully asked that his friend Mercier, the writer, who was in poor circumstances might have them instead. Greuze then removed to the Rue Thibodé, now known as the Rue des Bourdonnais, and thence to the Rue Notre-Dame des Victoires. But these moves did not have the effect of inducing Madame Greuze to give up her lovers or attend to the needs of her household. So much did this household suffer from her neglect that on one occasion Greuze was almost poisoned by drinking soup heated in a casserole coated with verdigris.

At this time the painter seems to have been living in fear of his wife, and we read of him waking up one night to find Anne Gabrielle standing over him in her nightdress threatening to dash his brains out.

The unhappy household's next move was to the Rue Basse, near the Porte Saint Denis. The painter's daughters had already come home, after their prolonged absence in the convent, to live with the parents they knew so little.

It was now that Greuze learnt that his wife was receiving men of bad character in the house, and for the sake of his daughters he tried to stop the scandal. One evening he intercepted a young man, a hairdresser, who was about to enter his wife's room; the visitor refused to retire, became violent and threatened the aggrieved husband with his fists. Greuze retired, either from cowardice or fear of a brawl causing fresh trouble. But the next morning, Sunday, December 11, 1785, Greuze went to the Commissary of Police in order to prevent a repetition

of the scene, and at the same time he opened legal proceedings against his wife. After some delay, Greuze obtained an order of separation, but he had to make ample provision for Madame Greuze. She was already in receipt of an annuity arranged for her by one of her lovers, M. de Saint Maurice, with money embezzled from her husband.

Greuze said that Anne Gabrielle was thirty years old when she first wished to marry him ; if this is true she must have been fifty-eight when, separated from him, she passed out of his life, and we know no more of her.

In the midst of the worst of his domestic troubles Greuze sought and found consolation in his painting, and one of the most pleasing of all his pictures, "The Broken Pitcher" (*La Cruche cassée*), was painted at the time when his private affairs were becoming a serious menace to his work. The painting represents a young girl, very dainty and charming, looking perhaps a trifle surprised and thoughtful, but not plunged in grief, at the breaking of her pitcher, which still hangs on her arm. She stands with her back to the fountain, and has some flowers in her skirt, which she holds caught up by her two very beautiful hands. A flower is also placed carelessly in the front of a quite low bodice that is slipping from her pretty shoulders, around which a light gauze scarf is draped. This serious little maiden cannot be Anne Gabrielle, but it might well be one of her daughters.

Madame Roland, at that time Mlle. Phlipon, was amongst the many visitors who came to Greuze's studio to see this picture. She fell in love with it, charmed with its fresh colouring and dainty beauty, and describes it in a letter to her friend,

THE LISTENING GIRL

In the Wallace Collection



Sophie Cannel. She writes also how she had told Greuze that "his little girl did not look sorry enough to prevent her returning to the fountain." This remark accompanied, doubtless, with much praise of the picture pleased the artist. Another picture Greuze was exhibiting at the same time entitled "The Father's Curse," has not the same attraction for Mlle. Phlipon, she finds the colour dull and the subject tiresome. This was another of those sermons in paint which Greuze continued to produce, and it represents a tragic scene. A young man whom we are to believe has been leading a wild life has enlisted. He is tearing himself away from the embraces of his mother and younger brothers and sisters. The father, too crippled by illness to move from his chair, has raised his right hand to call down curses from heaven on his erring son. A second picture completes the story. The old man is lying dead, his bed surrounded by his despairing children, all in attitudes expressing violent grief. The prodigal son stands in the doorway bowed with grief and shame, whilst his mother points to the corpse on the bed as if to accuse him of being the murderer. The little dog of nameless breed, introduced so frequently by Greuze into his pictures, has crept out from under the bed to see whether it should welcome or drive away the intruder. Our sympathies are with Mlle. Phlipon. Apart from their dreary colouring, these melodramatic pictures are unpleasant, and they have a tendency, like others of their kind, to enlist the sympathy of the spectator on the side of the culprit.

From the pen of Madame Roland we learn that Greuze had been patronized by the Emperor Joseph II of Austria, travelling under the name of Comte de Falkenstein. The emperor had

asked Greuze whether he had ever been in Italy and the artist had replied that he had lived there for two years, and was delighted when the emperor replied, "And you learnt nothing, your style is your own, you are the poet of your own pictures." Greuze was so pleased with this remark that he repeated it to Madame Roland, who, remembering the exhaustive titles and written explanations Greuze was in the habit of adding to his pictures, replied in flattering tones, "It is true, that if anything could add to the expressiveness of your paintings, Monsieur Greuze, it is your descriptions of them." Jean Baptiste was not put out by the clever lady's remark, his vanity enabled him to swallow it whole, and the author had to wait until she could repeat it to her friends before its whole meaning was appreciated.

It was just about this time that Greuze painted the charming portrait, now in the Wallace Collection, of Sophie Arnould, the famous French opera singer and actress, so renowned for her caustic wit. In 1773 he had dedicated to her the plate, engraved by Massard, of *La Cruche cassée*.

CHAPTER V

LAST YEARS AND DEATH

GREUZE was seventy when he finally separated from his wife and settled down in comparative poverty, but in peace, with his two daughters. The old man's health was impaired, and after losing so much money through the extravagance of his wife the large sum he had been obliged to pay to her on their separation had quite impoverished him. It is possible that Greuze living quietly and peacefully with his daughters might yet have repaired his fortune, for he had not quite lost his popularity. Both his daughters showed a talent for painting and helped him with his work. But clouds were gathering on the political horizon, and it was not long before the storm broke and France was bespattered by the blood of the Revolution.

In 1792, Greuze managed somehow, with the help of his friends, to secure a pension of 1537 livres on the Royal Treasury, but the downfall of the monarchy in the following year put an end to it. Very few artists lost their lives in the Revolution, although it brought ruin and starvation to them and many, like Prud'hon, fled from Paris until times were quieter. Artists were not aristocrats, but it was to the aristocracy they looked for their livelihood.

Greuze had had but few commissions from royalty; the subjects of his most popular pictures were taken from the lives of

working people, and as he had long ago quarrelled with the King's Academy, he was as safe as most people in the general upheaval, especially as he took no definite part in politics.

In his poverty he reaped benefit from one of the many kindnesses he had always been willing to do for young and friendless students in his own more prosperous days.

Jacques Louis David, the future founder of the new school of classical painting, was Boucher's nephew. As a student he had not easily arrived at success, and it was only after repeated attempts that he obtained the much coveted *Prix de Rome*. It was during this time that Greuze had helped and encouraged the young man. In 1780, David had returned to Paris and procured admission to the Academy with his picture "Belisarius." After this he married and went back to study further in Italy and also in Flanders, and the paintings he exhibited at regular intervals until 1789 show clearly the classic trend of his work, a little later on to form the nucleus of a new school of painting. For, unlike Greuze, David had returned to Paris filled with enthusiasm for the beauty of line expressed in classic architecture and sculpture. This classic influence shows itself in the "Oath of the Horatii" (1784), "The Death of Socrates" and "The Loves of Paris and Helen" (1788), and "Brutus condemning his Son" (1789).

David, a man then in the prime of life, had enthusiastically thrown in his lot with the revolutionary party, and in 1792 was a representative for Paris in the Convention and had voted for the death of Louis XVI. A member of the Committee of Public Safety and artistic director of the national fêtes of the Republic, he was a man of sufficient importance to be able to

extend a certain amount of help and protection to his old friend and sometime benefactor, Greuze; though after the death of Robespierre, David himself was twice imprisoned and narrowly escaped the guillotine. On his release in 1795, David devoted himself to his art, and in 1804 was appointed court painter by Napoleon.

Greuze was not altogether an easy man to help; his outspoken and candid remarks about the Revolution must have been a source of anxiety to his friends. Still, there are signs that he was not entirely without sympathy for the Revolutionists, and was ready to welcome a democracy that promised liberty to art, and, when royal patronage was a thing of the past, entirely reorganized his old enemy, the Academy. It even seems possible that Greuze made great efforts to identify himself with the Revolutionary party. We find him referring to Bailly as "*le vertueux chef de la commune*," and to La Fayette as "*le général de notre armée républicaine*." He is also loud in his praises of artists professing revolutionary principles, and got up on behalf of the artists of Paris an address to J. B. B. Le Brun, the famous picture dealer, at that time exhibiting in his rooms a collection of paintings by the Parisian artists. The dealer's wife, the celebrated Madame Vigée Le Brun, the intimate friend of Marie Antoinette, had fled from Paris in 1789, and was making a triumphal progress, her paintings securing her admission to the principal academies of Europe.

Greuze was now an old man, and in spite of his efforts, could not readily adjust his ideas and requirements to the new order of things. He successfully battled for his right to retain his apartments in the Louvre granted by the late monarch, and

although he had spent so many years painting sermons on the virtues of the poorer classes, he could not altogether approve of this social upheaval. The Revolution placed the government of the country in the hands of the common people, it murdered and drove into exile the rich and the educated, and it was from this class Greuze had hitherto derived patronage and income.

The old man's tongue had not lost its bluntness of speech. "Who is king this morning?" he would caustically ask his young friend David, as party succeeded party, and the leaders of one day became the victims of the next. Many a man lost his head for a more innocent remark, but David seems to have taken Greuze quite good naturedly, and through his influence, and possibly that of Madame Roland, many Revolutionary leaders came to Greuze for their portraits. Jean-Baptiste's very modest sympathy with the cause was not strong enough to prevent him accepting these commissions—and who would blame him, the elderly man with two daughters to provide for? It was fitting that he should be paid to paint the heads of these new patrons, as they had cut off those of his old clients !

This little group of portraits is historically interesting, apart from any artistic value it may possess. We have Fabre d'Églantine, the dramatist, with his white cravat and complexion of a dainty lady, looking like anything else in the world but a fiery revolutionist. He has an air of self-satisfaction and complacency, but does not look a dangerous person, and we are glad that Greuze had the opportunity of painting this head before it rolled from the scaffold in company with that of his friend Danton. There is Gensonné also, the eloquent orator of the Girondist party; this kindly face gives little idea of those biting

witticisms, finding weak points in the armour of his political foes, and probably eventually costing him his life. There is no reason to think that Greuze's portraits were anything but good likenesses. There is a simplicity and strength about most of his portraits, lacking in his genre pictures, and even in his girls' heads.

Perhaps his most famous portrait is that of Robespierre, "the sea-green Incorruptible." Greuze also painted General Dumouriez, Danton, Napoleon, and Josephine Beauharnais.

The remuneration for these portraits, however, was quite insufficient for the support of the little family, and they were often in great straits. Greuze augmented their income by taking pupils, and his daughters also earned a little money by their painting and needlework. We read of a small coal dealer purchasing for a few liards a painting of a young girl's head, the kind of picture that had been sold for such large sums in the past. In this case the painting was used as a shop-sign, fixed in place by the simple expedient of driving a nail through the canvas, and under it was written the legend *À la Belle Charbonnière*. In the year 1795 a national association for the promotion of the arts and sciences was formed to take the place of the academies, swept away with the monarchy in 1793.

In 1800 (An. VIII) we find Greuze, thirty-one years after his quarrel with the Academy, exhibiting in the resuscitated Salon. He showed fourteen pictures, including four portraits. He was then seventy-five; but the old man's vogue was past, and those who had money to pay for pictures were not attracted by simplicity or sentimentality. They required something more stirring for their money. This want was supplied by David and his followers, and the bias of public taste went in the direction of

classic tradition. It is possible that Greuze may have regretted his youthful freedom from classic influence, although the day had been when he was proud of the same. It speaks well for Greuze and his generous disposition that when Prud'hon felt it was safe to return to Paris, the friendless young man received from the sharp-tongued old painter a cordial welcome, denied him by David, Girodet, and other artists with established reputations. In order to appreciate adequately this kindly reception of a younger man one must remember that Pierre-Paul Prud'hon with all his Italian experience behind him, and his unmistakable talent, showed every sign of succeeding just where Greuze himself had failed. To be sure the welcome was tempered with a friendly and caustic warning. Showing Prud'hon his own tattered ruffles and shabby coat, he bade him beware of building high hopes on talent alone; this the old man assured him was sufficient in itself to ensure his dying in poverty, and he was to expect nothing from a democratic age in which there was "neither God nor devil, king nor court, nor rich and poor."

Nevertheless, some interest was taken in Greuze by the Bonaparte family. He had painted Napoleon when the future emperor was only a simple lieutenant, and in earlier days Josephine Beauharnais, had had her portrait painted by Greuze. Now in the painter's old age, Lucien Bonaparte took pity on him and gave him a commission to paint a subject from the nude. This picture is often spoken of as St. Mary of Egypt, but it is more probably meant for St. Mary Magdalen—for the latter saint was venerated in the Bonaparte family—and when Napoleon, wishing to raise a monument to *La grande Armée*, built a church on the lines of a Corinthian temple, he dedicated it to *La*

Madeleine. And Canova's much talked of "Penitent Magdalen" probably suggested the subject to Lucien Bonaparte.

It was not the first time Greuze had attempted this kind of picture, for he had painted this same subject more than forty years before, when his ability to paint the nude had been called in question. Greuze was also commissioned by the government to paint a full-length portrait of the First Consul, but his extreme poverty prevented him getting on with the work. In the February of 1801 we find Greuze begging the government to send him a little money on account. He received 1000 francs, but, overtaken by illness he made no progress with the work, and on the March 15, 1804, the old man of 79 writes to Champagny saying he has been ill for four months and again begs that a little more money be sent to him.

Greuze was never able to finish the portrait of the emperor—it was completed by his daughter, and is now at Versailles.

In 1804 (An. XII) Greuze exhibited five pictures in the Salon, these included a classical subject, "Ariadne in the island of Naxos." Some controversy has arisen as to whether the Ariadne, now in the Wallace Collection, is identical with that exhibited by Greuze in 1804. The picture in the Wallace Collection was purchased for Lord Hertford at the William Williams Hope sale in 1849, for the sum of £556 10s. It represents the head of a pretty fair-haired girl in a not very convincing attitude of grief. One hand is laid upon her uncovered bosom whilst the other supports her cheek. In spite of her name she is not unlike many other pretty maidens painted by the same artist, and the only really classical detail about the picture is the title.

Greuze also exhibited in 1804 a portrait of his daughter,

Anne Geneviève, and one of himself. This was considered to be one of the best portraits in the Salon of that year.

During the last years of his life, Greuze drew around him a little band of devoted women, consisting of his daughters Louise Gabrielle and Anne Geneviève, and his other pupils. Mention has already been made of his godchild, Caroline, afterwards Madame de Valori. It is to her we are indebted for most of the painter's early life, made into "Memoirs" by a pen guided by affection. There were also Madame Jubot, Mlle. Ledoux, and Mlle. Mayer. Mlle. Mayer had talent, and there are two pictures by her in the Louvre, *La Mère heureuse* and *La Mère abandonnée*. She was later the pupil and friend of Prud'hon, and mad with jealousy and love for him killed herself in 1821.

Another woman, an artist of whom Greuze might easily have been jealous, Madame Vigée Le Brun, gives us a pleasing description of Greuze in her memoirs. The old painter had called on her to welcome her back to Paris when she returned from Russia in 1801. "My first visitor next day was Greuze, whom I found unaltered. You might have said that he had never redressed his hair, for the same locks waved at each side of his head as before my departure. I was very glad to see him, and grateful for his attention."

On March 21, 1805, Greuze died in his apartments in the Louvre, painting and striving to provide for his daughters almost up to the end. On the day of the funeral, as the body was being carried from the church, a young lady, veiled in black, placed on the coffin a wreath of *immortelles* to which was attached the inscription, "These flowers are given by the most grateful of his pupils, and are an emblem of his glory."

Some controversy has taken place over the name of the lady; and the action is by some attributed to Mlle. Mayer, while Madame de Valori asserts that it was Madame Jubot. It matters very little. All his life Greuze had a respectful love for women and their beauty. He retained this affection after a woman, and a very beautiful one, had done her utmost to shatter it, and it was fitting that women should have rallied round him and cheered the last moments of his life, and that one of them, no matter who, should have paid him a last tribute of respect.

The *Journal de Paris* contented itself with announcing the death of the painter in a few lines. "The celebrated Greuze, composer of pictures full of charm, interest, and sensibility, which have obtained for him the honourable title of painter of morals." Of his colleagues, Dumont and Barthélemy alone were present at his funeral.

In spite of all his courageous efforts to provide for his two daughters, Greuze was only able to leave them, besides his drawings and paintings, the small sum of 3167 francs, and a debt owing from M. Tibault of 2000 livres.

The daughters kept themselves after their father's death by their painting and needlework. Louise Gabrielle died in 1812, and Anne Geneviève in 1842.

It is said that when Napoleon heard of the death of Greuze and the poverty harassing his last years, he said: "Why did he not tell me? I would have given him a Sèvres vase full of gold, to pay for all his broken pitchers."

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

IT is often remarked of Jean-Baptiste Greuze, that in spite of the immense popularity he enjoyed for so many years of his life, he founded no school of painting, and produced no marked effect upon art. This is true. His break with the Academy, and failure to obtain a professorship would naturally prevent him having a large following amongst the students of his day, but the truth lies in the fact that Greuze represented a break away from the traditions of French painting. He, like Chardin, went to the Flemish in preference to the Italian School, for inspiration ; and his first successes were due to his choice of subjects and style of painting coinciding with the fashionable sentiment of the times. The gospel of bourgeois virtue, preached by men making no pretence of leading virtuous lives themselves, produced a rapid and exaggerated crop of admiration for all things claiming to be natural and simple. As long as this movement proved a source of interest to the world of fashion, the success of the painter Greuze, the chief exponent in art of this phase of the public mind, was assured.

Greuze by himself was not a great enough artist to make any marked impression upon French art. It was impossible for art to flourish after the fall of the monarchy, and when the devastating wave of the Revolution subsided the new school sought its inspiration in classic tradition, in keeping with the republican

admiration for all things connected with ancient Greece and Rome, an admiration manifesting itself in the pedantic adoption of classic names.

Greuze profited by circumstances in the early portion of his career but fell a victim to them in the end.

It has been said that Greuze would have been a great historical painter, had it not been for his unhappy married life. Without doubt his work suffered, and it was impossible for him to produce any important imaginative work when his mind was occupied with painting pictures he knew would sell in order to provide money to meet Madame's extravagance.

But it was imagination Greuze needed, and, as is usual with people lacking that quality or a sense of humour, he was unaware of the deficiency. Madame Greuze had plenty of faults, but it is well to remember that she provided a model for the larger number of the pictures enjoyed to-day by admirers of her husband's work. When we look at "Innocence," "The Listening Girl," "Fidelity," or a "Bacchante," and many others, we are not looking at a portrait of Anne Gabrielle or any other pretty young woman, but we are looking at Anne Gabrielle endowed with virtues and feelings which Greuze at that moment wished to paint and supposed his model capable of possessing.

If Greuze had possessed sufficient imagination he would have been aware that childlike eyes, a rounded cheek and a kissable mouth are not necessarily the accompaniments of innocence, and that real grief seldom makes a pretty picture.

Greuze has thus laid himself open to the charge of being unnatural and theatrical, but if we neglect the titles of these

pictures, and look at them as works of art depicting youth and beauty, there is more to enjoy and praise than to blame.

We offer no slight to the artist in thus looking at his work, for apart from a marked similarity in the poses and features of many of his models there is little doubt that the same pictures have been identified at different times under other names without loss of interest.

Thus, "Fidelity" appears to have been known originally as "The Souvenir," and the "Girl in a Blue Dress" as *L'Ingénuité*. There is confusion too, between "Psyche" and "A Magdalen."

Greuze painted women and children as if he loved them and could not tire of them. The little "Cupid with a Torch," at Hertford House, is a delightfully chubby baby; and the little boy, also in the Wallace Collection, pausing in his play with the spaniel to caress his four-footed companion, clinging meanwhile to his whip and ball, is thoroughly childlike and free from the artificiality so often present in Greuze's paintings.

To blame Greuze for artificiality is to separate the artist from his times. Of course, we are not convinced that the dainty maiden, leaning on the neck of her pony and carrying a milk-dipper in her dimpled hand, is a real milkmaid such as Greuze could have met any day in the dirty streets of eighteenth-century Paris, or on a country road; but then, Marie Antoinette and the great ladies playing with her in the Petit Trianon were not real shepherdesses.

Greuze is an artist of his own time, and if art can be defined as "Nature passed through the alembic of man's mind" his artificiality is, to use a paradox, perfectly natural.

FIDELITY OR THE SOUVENIR

In the Wallace Collection



With art and literature, both impregnated with artificiality, Greuze would have been a strong man indeed if he had proved himself free of it, and had he done so would never have enjoyed the popularity he did. Chardin, whose work is far more natural, and has great charm, never received large prices for his work, or anything like the praise and interest lavished on Greuze. *La Laitière* is a very pretty young woman, and the picture would have lost nothing had her occupation been left to the imagination. The paintings of Greuze have been described, and not unjustly, as a "mixture of sentiment and sensuality." Greuze himself, like most unimaginative people, was essentially sentimental, and if he admired and chose to paint that type of feminine beauty which is not free from a suggestion of sensuality he is not singular in his choice. The absurdity of exhibiting a portrait of his wife as a "Vestal" does not seem to have occurred to Greuze, although his friends made merry over the incident; but our English Romney did worse when his admiration for Lady Hamilton led him to paint her as a Christian saint without disguising her identity. When Greuze becomes didactic, and tries to deliver sermons with his brush, he is far less natural than when he is painting pretty girls and labelling them "Fidelity," "Grief," or any other sentiment, although his melodramas are staged in homely scenery.

His first picture, "A Father of a Family reading the Bible to his Children," was probably painted because he had witnessed a similar scene somewhere and it appealed to his emotions and to his sense of beauty; but succeeding compositions such as *Le Paralytique secouru par ses enfants*, *La Mort d'un Père de Famille regretté par ses enfants*, *Le Fils puni*, and many others

were the result of encouragement received from Diderot and his circle. Critics who maintain that Greuze might have been a great historical painter had it not been for his wife would do well to lay a large share of the blame upon the shoulders of Diderot. For Diderot flattered and encouraged Greuze, and flattery is a subtle and strong incentive to a man of Greuze's temperament. Having won his allegiance by praise and the assurance that he was an artist after his own heart—" *Greuze est mon peintre*," he tells his friends more than once—Diderot used his eloquence to influence Greuze in his choice of subjects, and when the pictures of bourgeois life are exhibited, loads them with extravagant praises, at the same time attacking the painter's rival, Boucher, not merely because he represented the decorative as opposed to the realistic school of art, but also as the symbol of a corrupt society.

Apropos of Boucher's fondness for painting undraped figures, Diderot declares, "I am no friar" (nobody ever accused him of being one), "but would willingly sacrifice the pleasure of looking at beautiful nude figures if by so doing I could hasten the moment when more decorous painting and sculpture could join forces with the other arts, to inspire virtue and purify morals."

Greuze exhibited no picture from the nude in the Salon until after the death of Diderot, but we get an inkling of the coarseness of the times when he exhibits a painting of his wife *enceinte*, and the philosopher Diderot, the self-instituted pillar of public morality, praises it as a masterpiece and dwells on every detail; and this is the same critic, who, in speaking of the picture *L'Embaras d'une Couronne*, complains that the figure is insufficiently draped.

Diderot was never tired of urging that "Painting and Poetry ought to be *bene moratae*," and that art must preach a moral; that her business was "to make virtue lovable, and vice odious," to "do honour to unhappy and afflicted virtue and to cast opprobrium on honoured and praised vice." In this theory he was upheld by other philosophers, some asserting that art was dependent upon morality; but the morality they thought and talked so much of was to be found nowhere except in the home of the humble worker, and they apparently regarded it as unnecessary and inconvenient in their own lives. Diderot was a wise man, he knew that the greater number of people will run eagerly to see the most commonplace picture if it tells a story they can easily understand, when they may be bored with a Venus or Minerva, however fine a work of art.

In England, Hogarth had already discovered the same thing; but whereas Greuze was content to paint the virtues or fancied virtues of the poor, Hogarth filled his pockets and endeavoured to improve the morals of his time, by depicting the "Sins of Society" and other unpleasant subjects. Hogarth and the coarseness of his subjects may revolt us, but he was a stronger artist than Greuze, and he influenced for good and evil the painters in the following generation. This Greuze did not do. Romney, when he visited Paris in 1764, may have drawn some inspiration from Greuze. We know that the two artists were on friendly terms with one another. Greuze was Romney's senior by nine years, and was already a popular and well-known artist when the two first met. The cabinet-maker's son had only two years previously come up to London, and his great success was still a thing of the future. On his second visit to Paris in 1790 the

tables were turned, and Romney had become immensely popular and was receiving large sums for his pictures, whereas Greuze was already feeling the pinch of poverty.

The painter's own pupils followed Greuze in their choice of subjects as Mlle. Mayer did with her *La Mère heureuse* and *La Mère abandonnée*, but such influence was short-lived.

On the whole, the subjects chosen by Greuze are pleasant. When Lord Hertford wrote to his agent, S. M. Mawson, saying, "I only like pleasing pictures," he unconsciously voiced the sentiments of a very large number of people. That he himself admired Greuze in his paintings of young girls and children is certain, for he was the possessor of no fewer than twenty-one examples of this master's work.

With the exception of the few examples of his work in the National Gallery and in private collections, Greuze was comparatively little known in England before the gift of the Wallace Collection to the nation in 1900, though many of these pictures had been exhibited before in Bethnal Green Museum.

Greuze's portraits form a very large and important section of his work, he must have painted over a hundred, and they are representative of many strata of society.

We have members of his own family and near friends, as his father-in-law, Babuti, Wille, and Diderot. The stage is represented by Milles. Clairon, Sophie Arnould, La Dugazon, and others. People of importance by the Duc de Choiseul and his wife, Talleyrand, etc., and for royalty we have the Duc de Chartres, the Duc d'Orleans, the Dauphin, and Louis XVI. After this there are the revolutionary leaders mentioned in the previous chapter.

These portraits are simple and direct in painting, and instinctively we feel they are good likenesses. In the Wallace Collection there are two excellent examples, "Sophie Arnould" and a "Portrait of a Lady," but as a portrait painter Greuze is not well represented in England.

Greuze painted his own portrait several times, beginning when he was a young man and ending with the painting exhibited just before his death. An early portrait of the artist, executed for M. le Commandeur Nicolas de Démidoff, shows us a good-looking young man, with well marked features, bright lively eyes, a pleasant expression, and an air of being well content with himself. This picture is in the Louvre, and there also is to be found the painting of the artist as an old man. It is characteristic of Greuze that he should have been so interested in his own face, even up to the end.

Greuze's portraits have another advantage over his fancy heads, apart from their strength and simplicity. The artist is here making a direct painting from a given model, and he usually paints his sitters conscientiously in their accustomed clothes. We thus have not only an interesting record of the dress of the period but we get away from the rather monotonous *négligé* Greuze so delighted in for his other feminine models. It has been said of Greuze that he tried to endow the chemise with the dignity of a Greek tunic. That is as may be; at any rate, the more modern garment became in this artist's hands, a means of disclosing and enhancing the charms of his models instead of veiling them. "Greuze a très rarement peint la nudité, mais presque toujours les déshabillés."

Like many artists producing large numbers of pictures,

Greuze fell into many little mannerisms. This one of his drapery is very marked, as is also his fondness for supporting his model's cheek on one of her hands. The display of shoulder also, has a tendency to make his young girls posed and unnatural. We know they could not possibly move from their position without being inconvenienced by their clothes slipping still farther off.

Having regard to the great number of pictures and portraits Greuze painted, it is clear that however quickly he worked when once started on a canvas, he must also have cultivated the "gift of alacrity" in beginning his compositions. This is a quality artists are often deficient in, and possibly Greuze's early training in the picture factory of Grondon had helped him.

Dr. Johnson, giving advice to those about to write, says, "I advise every young man beginning to compose, to do it as fast as he can, and to get a habit of having his mind to start promptly, it is so much more difficult to improve in speed than in accuracy." He is not suggesting that speed is of more value than accuracy, for later on he adds, "A man knows when his composition is inaccurate, and when he thinks fit he'll correct it. But, if a man is accustomed to compose slowly, and with difficulty upon all occasions, there is danger that he may not compose at all, as we do not like to do that which is not done easily; and at any rate, more time is consumed in a small matter than ought to be." If this is true in literature it is doubly so in art, and in all branches many clever students, with a real feeling for form and colour, and endowed with fertile imagination, waste themselves and dissipate their forces, because in the beginning of an undertaking they are unable to concentrate their minds and regard their work as "a whole," leaving accuracy and detail to come later.

There are always a certain number of preachers of the gospel of freedom in art, ready to decry any rule laid down to harness the artistic mind, and these would lay the blame of certain poverty of conception, often apparent in the work of Greuze, to this very rapidity of composition. But this poverty is due rather to the artist's own inherent lack of imagination, and not to an imagination crushed and stifled by training.

Though lacking in originality, Greuze was no careless worker. He strove hard to improve the quality of his work, and laboured to obtain not only good effects but lasting colour. The result of his efforts began to make themselves felt about 1767, when his colour becomes stronger and purer, whilst retaining a softness of effect.

His colour is always most successful when painting the flesh of young girls and children; with men he is inclined to be too heavy in tone and his colour becomes dirty. This happens often, too often, in his backgrounds. In the "Broken Mirror" the room occupied by the young woman sitting with clasped hands, deploring her accident, has walls of such dirty colour that it suggests surroundings far too sordid for the satin dress and toilet accessories of the occupant. In the "Votive offering to Cupid" also the trees are too heavy, and the background altogether too sombre. It crushes the little figure instead of throwing it into sharper relief, which was probably the artist's intention. Forced effects of this kind are seldom successful.

By no means the least interesting side to any artist's work is that occupied by his sketches and studies. Greuze is no exception to this rule.

His exquisite drawings in red chalk show children's and young

women's heads drawn with so much feeling that the want of colour is forgotten. The freedom of line, and absence of all hesitation show the ability Greuze possessed as a draughtsman, an ability recommending him to all engravers, and enabling him to join forces with Flipart, Gaillard, Levasseur, and Massard. With these celebrated engravers he formed a little company, and if Anne Gabrielle had not been treasurer and secretary, Greuze might have lived and died a rich man on the profits. Studies for pictures such as *Le Départ pour la chasse* show with what ease Greuze sketched and arranged his compositions, whilst his chalk studies from the nude reveal a strength and unity of line his drapery would scarcely lead us to expect.

The rules Greuze laid down for students are nearly always good, though it is obvious that he did not in every case practise them himself. "Be piquant if you cannot be true" shows that Greuze regarded dullness in art as a heinous crime. Perhaps if Greuze had always been true to his own temperament he never would have been dull, and when he suffered from this fault it was because he allowed his friends the encyclopædists too much influence, and literature weighed too heavily upon art.

LIST OF PAINTINGS BY GREUZE

WALLACE COLLECTION

Innocence.
 Psyche. (*Formerly Sorrow.*)
 Espièglerie.
 Fidelity *or* The Souvenir.
 The Listening Girl.
 Mlle. Sophie Arnould.
 Bacchante.
 Portrait of a Lady.
 Girl with a Gauze Scarf.
 Boy with a Dog.
 Ariadne.
 Girl in a Blue Dress.
 Girl in a White Dress.
 A Girl with Doves.
 Flying Cupid with a Torch.
 Psyche. (*Formerly Study of Grief.*)
 The Votive Offering to Cupid
 (*L'Offrande à l'Amour.*)
 The Broken Mirror (*Le Malheur
 Imprévu.*)
 Girl Leaning on her Hand.
 The Inconsolable Widow. (*Formerly
 Filial Piety.*)
 The Letter-Writer.

NATIONAL GALLERY

Head of a Girl.
 Head of a Girl Looking Up.
 Girl with an Apple.
 Girl carrying a Lamb.

LOUVRE

Tête de jeune fille.
 Danaé.
 Portrait de Gensonné.
 Portrait de Fabre d'Églantine.
 Portrait de jeune garçon.
 Portrait de l'auteur.
 Portrait du peintre Étienne Jeaurat.
 Portrait de l'auteur.
 L'Empereur Sévère reproche à Caracalla,
 son fils, d'avoir voulu l'assassiner.
 L'Accordée de village.
 La Malédiction paternelle.
 Le Fils puni.
 La Cruche cassée.
 La Laitière.
 Les Deux amies.
 L'Oiseau mort.
 L'Enfant à la poupée.
 L'Effroi.
 Portrait d'homme.
 Portrait du médecin Duval.
 Portrait presume de Gluck.
 Jeune fille (étude).
 Jeune fille (étude).

EXHIBITS IN THE SALON

SALON OF 1755.

L'Aveugle trompé.
 Un Père de famille qui lit la Bible à ses
 enfants.

LIST OF PAINTINGS by GREUZE—*Continued.*

SALON OF 1755—*Continued.*

Tête d'après nature.
Portrait de M. Sylvestre, directeur de l'Académie.
Portrait de M. Lebas, graveur du cabinet du Roi.

SALON OF 1757.

Les Œufs cassés.
Le Geste Napolitain.
La Paresseuse Italienne.
Un Oiseleur accordant sa guitare.
Portrait de Pigalle.
Portrait de M * * *, en ovale.
Un Matelot Napolitain.
Un Écolier qui étudie, sa leçon.
Deux Têtes, un petit garçon, et une petite fille.
Des Italiens qui jouent à la more. (*Sketch in Chinese ink.*)

SALON OF 1759.

Le Repos : Une femme impose silence à son fils en lui montrant les autres enfants qui dorment.
La Simplicité.
La Tricoteuse endormie.
La Dévideuse.
Une Jeune Fille qui pleure la mort de son oiseau.
Portrait de M. de * * *, jouant de la harpe.
Portrait de Mme. la Marquise de * * * accordant sa guitare.
Portrait de M. * * *, docteur de la Sorbonne.
Portrait de Mlle. de * * * sentant une rose.
Portrait de Mlle. Amici en habit de caractère.
Portrait de Babuti, libraire, beau-père de Greuze.

SALON OF 1759—*Continued.*

Trois Têtes. (Studies.)
Deux Têtes.
Une Tête.
Two sketches in Chinese ink.

SALON OF 1761.

Portrait de M. le Dauphin.
Portrait de M. Babuti, beau-père de Greuze.
Portrait de M. Greuze, peint par lui-même.
Portrait de Mme. Greuze en vestale.
Un Père qui vient de payer la dot de sa fille (*L'Accordée de village*).
La Petite Blanchisseuse.
Un Jeune Berger qui tient un chardon à la main et qui tente le sort pour savoir s'il est aimé de sa bergère.
Une Tête de nymphe de Diane.
L'Enfant qui boude.
L'Enfant qui se repose sur sa chaise.
Des Enfants qui dérobent des marrons. (*Drawing.*)
Le Paralytique. (*Drawing.*)
Le Fermier incendié. (*Drawing.*)

SALON OF 1763.

La Piété filiale (le Paralytique secouru par ses enfants).
Portrait de M. le duc de Chartres.
Portrait de Mademoiselle.
Portrait de M. le comte de Lupé.
Portrait de Mlle. de Pange.
Portrait de Mme. Greuze.
Portrait de M. Watelet.
Une Petite Fille lisant la Croix de Jésus.
Tête de petit garçon.
Tête de petite fille.
Autre Tête de petite fille.
Le Tendre Ressouvenir.

LIST OF PAINTINGS by GREUZE—*Continued.*

SALON OF 1765.

La Jeune fille qui pleure son oiseau mort.
 L'Enfant gâté.
 Une Tête de fille.
 Une Petite Fille qui trent un capucin de bois.
 Tête de petite fille.
 Tête en pastel.
 Tête de M. Watelet.
 Portrait de Mme. Greuze.
 Portrait du graveur Wille.
 Portrait de sculpteur Caffieri.
 Portrait de M. Guibert.
 Portrait de Mme. Tassart.
 Portrait de M. de la Live de Jully.
 La Mère bien-aimée. (*Sketch.*)
 Le Fils ingrat. (*Sketch.*)
 Le Fils puni. (*Sketch.*)
 Les Sevreuses. (*Sketch.*)

SALON OF 1769.

Septime Sévère reproche à Caracalla, son fils, d'avoir attenté à sa vie dans les défilés d'Écosse.
 La Mère bien-aimée.
 La Jeune Fille qui fait sa prière au pied de l'autel de l'Amour.
 La Petite Fille en camisole qui tient entre ses genoux un chien noir, avec lequel elle joue.
 Portrait du prince héréditaire de Saxe-Gotha.
 Portrait du peintre Jaurat.
 Portrait de M. de * * *
 Trois Têtes d'enfant.
 La Mort d'un père de famille regretté par ses enfants. (*Drawing.*)
 La Mort d'un père de famille dénaturé abandonné par ses enfants. (*Drawing.*)
 L'Avare et ses enfants. (*Drawing.*)
 La Bénédiction paternelle. (*Drawing.*)

SALON OF 1769—*Continued.*

Le Départ de la barcelonette. (*Drawing.*)
 La Consolation de la vieillesse. (*Drawing.*)

YEAR VIII (1800).

Le Départ pour la chasse.
 Portrait du C * * * dans un paysage, avec sa femme.
 Deux tableaux faisant pendants.
 Un Enfant hésitant de toucher un oiseau dans la crainte qu'il ne soit mort.
 Une Jeune Femme se disposant à écrire une lettre d'amour.
 Portrait : une Jeune Femme preludant sur un forte-piano.
 Deux Portraits d'homme.
 Trois têtes de différents caractères.
 La Peur de l'orage.
 La Crainte et le desir.
 Le Sommeil.
 Deux pendants.
 L'Innocence tenant deux pigeons.
 Une Jeune Fille bouchant ses oreilles pour ne pas entendre ce qu'on lui dit.

YEAR IX (1801).

Le Repentir de Sainte Marie l'Égyptienne dans le desert.
 Un Cultivateur remettant la charrue à son fils en presence de sa famille.
 Un Enfant.
 Portrait d'homme.
 Portrait de vieillard.

YEAR XII (1804).

Le Repentir de Sainte Marie l'Égyptienne.
 Ariane dans l'île de Naxos.
 Le Portrait de l'auteur.
 Un Portrait de femme.
 Deux têtes de jeunes filles : la Timidité, la Gaieté.

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